

Isle of Wight 2006

A holiday with South West Peninsula Group MCC

Wednesday 7th June.

Our holiday started with a gentle drive to Brockenhurst in the New Forest.

On arrival Lesley got out of the van to put the levelling blocks into position. Mean while Jack slid across in to the drivers seat to drive onto the blocks, and Max jumped out of the passenger window right over Lesley's head.

A man who was sunning himself nearby with his boxer dogs, eventually caught him, and returned a gleeful Max.

Later Lesley took Max out onto the common and he was a good boy, returning when called.

Thursday 8th June

A hot and sunny day dawned. After a leisurely breakfast we strolled into Brockenhurst, and sat outside a café with a coffee, eating apple strudel. Delicious

Max had his usual romp on the common in the afternoon, and again in the evening, before an early night.

Friday 9th June. - Happy birthday Sandra Piddock! Glorious sunshine – let's hope it continues. We were at the ferry terminal early – too early - and had to go away for an hour! – Soon we were back again and in the queue to board the Lymington to Yarmouth ferry. The crossing was very calm. Max wasn't sure about it as he could feel movement but we weren't driving. On the ferry we got to know Dave and Ann from Poole. They followed us to the camp site at Shanklin, and we arrived at about 1 pm. The first vans had arrived at 8.00am. They were so eager to begin their holiday, they came across in the middle of the night! There's a music festival in Newport, and the ferries were running from 4.00am. The M25 had been closed owing to a lorry fire, so there were some horrendous tales when people checked in. They were really pleased that the urn was on for a welcome cuppa, and the weather was great, so all the cares of the journey were soon washed away.

After setting up, we sat in the sun, waving at other arrivals, on of whom were John and Dot from Lancashire, who we had met the previous year in Keswick!!



Saturday 10th June It's 8.30am, and something very strange is happening. Sandra P & Tony are up before Larry and June! Has June got fed up with Larry messing up her organisation and murdered him in his bed? Has Larry expired from all the walking while siting vans yesterday? Has their dog Jazz made one of her aromatic rear end emissions and asphyxiated the pair of them? Just as we are about to call the emergency services, a bleary-eyed June emerges from the van.



A hectic afternoon letting everyone know what was happening tonight. June went round the field flogging Bonus Balls. As England were playing, she didn't do too well, but she managed to natter to a couple of football widows to pass the afternoon. England scraped through, but, as nobody scored, our sweepstake rolls over to Thursday. Larry said we wouldn't bother with the swear bucket as there were only 4 of us in the van. Good job, as Sandra's expletive count was 18, which would have cost her £1.80!

I walked Max, and found a really nice woodland walk complete with stream for him to play in. Lynn Baharie and her 2 dogs came with me. On the return across the fields we got caught by the watering system, and returned as contenders for a wet tee shirt competition! – The water was a bit cold too.

In the evening, we held a Silent Auction and American Supper, organised by Isle of Wight centre. There were some foolhardy husbands who ventured the opinion that their wives couldn't possibly come, because they didn't understand the concept of silence! A great time was had by all, and £80 was raised for charity. We all had some real bargains –Sanda P's included a Camping Gaz lantern for 50p, and a hammock for 70p. she's just got to persuade Tony to build her a stand for it. A fairly early night tonight. Are we turning into Ovaltineys? I'm worried now.

Sunday 11th June

Up with the lark to prepare for a coffee morning for 120. Thankfully, the Isle of Wight Group did the honours. For a group who think 10 vans is a large rally, they managed to feed and water everyone in less than 20 minutes. We're impressed, guys!



Highlight of the morning was The Great Terry Earles wind-up. At Carlyon Bay in May, Jack Dempsey caught Terry drinking Ovaltine instead of his usual Guinness. Not being one to keep such a gem to himself, Jack downloaded the history of Ovaltine, the Ovaltineys Song and a membership certificate from the Internet. We laid on a 'This is Your Life,' followed by a rendition of the Ovaltineys song and a presentation of a jar of Ovaltine. We also forged a Compulsory Transfer Certificate. Here in SWP, we can't cope with members who can't drink industrial quantities of alcohol. What a wind up!

Sunday afternoon saw two very unusual events. We had a Lawn Games afternoon, complete with Sangria, and June did the washing up! In our 4 years with SWP, we've never once spotted June with the Fairy Liquid. What a day! We wound up the day with a visit to the Liberal Club. About 30 members made the effort, and we had a great evening. Some had a better evening than others. It took 3 of us to get Tony into the van. He said the step had moved while we were out, but we know better than that, don't we, boys and girls?



At 3.00pm, after a barbecue lunch, Sanda P and Tony set off in their hire car for Cornwall. Terry and Sandra and Jack and Lesley promised to fill in for them until they get back. Jack and Lesley also hired a car, and went out for the day with John and Dot. First port of call was Brading Roman Villa, where there were very good mosaic floors to be viewed. The views from the downs above the site of the villa were spectacular

too! A few miles down the road in the village of Godshill we visited a model village of the village. It was brilliant – complete with staker on the football pitch.

We then returned to the van to take Max out, before going for an evening drive to watch the sun set from St Catherine’s point.



Saturday 17th June.
Today we took June and Larry out to get them away from “running the rally”.
We spent an interesting morning at the Amazon World, viewing animals and museum exhibits. Lunch was very pleasant. June directed us to a pub with large terrace where we enjoyed a leisurely lunch before returning to the site. Glenys and John kindly looked after Max for the morning, and said he was lovely!

In the evening Lesley took a coach party of line dances into Newport for a country and Western evening. She had to deal with some very disgruntled punters. The driver for coach trip to the Country and Western Evening in Newport was a graduate from the Basil Fawltly School of Customer Service. Not only did he drive like a lunatic, he told everybody they had to be back on the coach by 10.00pm or he would leave without them. His driving was so erratic on the way back that he was stopped by the Police and breathalised. A huge cheer went up, and there was no tip forthcoming. We don’t do miserable in SWP, and we don’t appreciate it in others!



A bright day dawned and Lesley, Jack, Terry and Sandra E set off for a drive round the Island. Larry & June were on dog patrol. We stopped at Bembridge for coffee and Ryde for elevesens, where Terry and Sandra had Jellied eels – Yuk! Lunch found us heading on the chain ferry from East Cowes into West Cowes, where we found a very nice café serving a very cheap but delicious Sunday Roast. Afternoon tea was had at Victoria Fort, with views over the Solent.

Then it was a trip out to see the needles, and the coastal route back to the camp site, returning in time for SWP’s version of the X Factor, which Terry was comparing. We all know we are well endowed with homegrown talent in SWP, but it was a revelation to see how many performers came forward from our guest groups. We had a Pam Ayres soundalike, some great musicians, Hinge and Bracket from Yorkshire, and our own Terry, Brian and June. Jack Dempsey bought the house down with the sad story of ‘Paddy’s Sick Note,’ complete with blood, bandages and bricks. Don’t even ask – you had to be there!





Sandra P composed a little ditty about the goings-on so far which went down very well – (Words at the end of the diary), but the highlight of the evening was our own Pete Keeley. Those of you who have heard Pete’s monologues will know how funny he can be, but there was an extra something – the X Factor – in his performance tonight. In the middle of his recitation, his false teeth leapt onto the grass. Without missing a beat, he bent down, picked them up, replaced them and carried on where he left off. Mind you, he was picking bits of grass out of his mouth for days afterwards!

Unfortunately, the evening was a bit chilly, so we had to bring the curtain down early. A group of us retired to the heated gazebo to mull over the evening over a drink or several. Another great day.

Monday 19th June

Up bright and early for our Island Tour. This is the most popular trip so far, with 74 campers piling into 2 coaches. Thankfully, our drivers today are really pleasant and informative. In a packed day, we visit the Model Village at Godshill, the Needles at Alum Bay and the Pearl Centre, where we stop for lunch. Here we encounter Mrs Fawley. It takes over an hour to feed our starving hordes, and there’s not even a smile or an apology to smooth matters over. Most of us didn’t even have time to look at the beautiful jewellery on display. The relief on some of the husband’s faces as they emerge with their wallets unmolested makes me wonder whether they had bribed Mrs Fawley to cock up our meals!

Tuesday 20th June

A group of us decide to ride into Ryde on the train. It’s a bit like stepping into a time warp, as the trains are London Underground’s best, circa 1950. We take the dogs along with us. Lesley’s dog, Max, has never been on a train before, and he can’t quite decide whether he likes it or not. He’s got a very expressive face, and it’s quite comical watching his reactions to all the jerks and strange noises. Larry and June’s Jazz takes it all in her stride. She’s been there, done that, got the t-shirt.

Terry Earles has been teaching Sandra P the finer points of the Cockney Lingo during this holiday, and he decides that, in order to become a fully-fledged honorary Cockney, I have to down a large plate of jellied eels. He’s havin’ a larf! I settle for cockles while the rest of them tuck into jellied eels and whelks on Ryde Esplanade. Ryde’s a lovely town for just pottering around, and we have a great afternoon with good company.

Homeward bound, and Max decides if he has to go back on the train, he’s going to ride in comfort. Unfortunately for Sandra P, he decides the most comfortable place on the train is her lap! By the time we reach Shanklin, she’s numb from the thighs down, having traveled from Ryde with a Labrador on her lap. However, we have a lovely surprise to go back to. Sandra and Terry, Lesley and Jack and Glenys and John are cooking a barbecue with all the trimmings for Tony, Larry, June and Sandra P. Sandra E sits the hosts in the far corner of her awning, so nobody can see them! Its good fun hosting a rally, but it’s lovely to be off duty for a few hours.

After disposing of enough food to feed a Third World country, we troop off to the Liberal Club to see if England can improve on Saturday’s performance. They scrape through, and another six quid goes into the charity box. Larry manages not to swear at all – Tony is Champion Curser this time.

Unfortunately, as Sandra P don't allow him any pocket money, she has to pay for his expletives, so it's an expensive night!



A large group including Jack Lesley, John and Dot went off to Osborne House and gardens. The house was very dark, and the furnishings were very somber. Meanwhile, a smaller group head off to Newport and the Bus and Coach Museum in a minibus we've hired for a couple of days. It's about as state of the art as yesterday's train. The speedometer works when it feels like it, and the handbrake doesn't like hills. In Newport, Sandra E looks everywhere for a post box. When they sit down for coffee in the town square, she spots one about 10 yards away. She walked past it without noticing it. Well, she is blonde!

June finds a lovely riverside pub for lunch. When they finally manage to separate Brian George and Pete Keeley from their pint glasses, they visit a vineyard. The idea is to buy some wine to take home, but after tasting it, they decide it's not such a good idea after all. Perhaps their taste buds have been numbed by all the alcohol that's washed over them during the last week or so, but Sandra P reckons she had "never tasted anything so awful in my life!" It's about the first time ever she'd come away from a tasting without trying everything on the table.

After a quick wash and brush up, it's off to the Wight Mouse again. Another brilliant meal. I try the grilled Sea Bass, while Jack has Steak & Ale pie again. It's very windy during the night, and Larry is out of bed repegging the gazebos at 2.00am.

Thursday 22nd June

Despite Larry's nocturnal efforts, the gazebos are definitely wonky. More straightening and repegging is needed. Some unkind person suggests that the reason the gazebos are leaning is because of all the alcohol fumes they have absorbed over the last fortnight, but we don't believe that, do we, boys and girls?



Off in the minibus again. First stop is the Donkey Sanctuary at Wroxall. Everybody enjoys it, although some of the donkeys look even more clapped out than we are. What you might call wonky donkeys, if you were a poet!



Then we make a coffee stop at Godshill. June thought Terry might like to see the village, as he wasn't with us on Monday, but he doesn't get any further than the café in the car park



Next stop is Winkle Street, another time warp. They don't even allow cars down there, as they would be out of place among the olde worlde cottages. 2 mishaps on the way – our navigator June takes us the scenic route,



which includes an unscheduled whiz through Newport, and Jack decides to seek attention by passing out on us. We prop him up on the plastic stool we're using for a step until he comes to. It's not very often that a member of SWP passes out without the assistance of alcohol, but this is one of those occasions.

Happily, Jack is fully recovered by the time we stop for lunch at the White Lion at Niton. This has been recommended to us by Mike, the site warden, and we can see what he means. The food is absolutely fabulous, and the barmaid is up for a larf with our Tel and the rest of us. Our corner is a bit noisy, so we feel sorry for a young couple who are trying to have a romantic 'diner a deux,' but they assure us that we have made their day. We're meeting some smashing people on this trip.



Final stop is the Botanical Gardens at Ventnor. After a suitable plant fix, we head back to base camp to doll ourselves up for our Farewell Party at the Liberal Club. (Yes, I know tonight isn't our last night, but the Liberal Club couldn't cope with 120 hungry campers on Friday!)

The food is great, the entertainers are brilliant, and the booze is cheap. What more can one ask for on an evening out? Well, I hate to introduce a sour note into the diary, but we could have done without all the hassle over smoking. Some people just can't accept that others have different viewpoints. I won't labour the point, but, as rally hosts, Sandra P, Tony, June & Larry weren't too happy that persons unknown went behind their backs, against MCC policy, to try to make our function room non-smoking for the entire evening. There was a lot of needless upset, and three committee members and Jack were insulted. Live and let live, I say. We are, after all, 'The Friendliest Club!' Let's keep it that way

Friday 23rd June

Up with the lark, after a very late night, for our Solent Cruise. On the Island Tour on Monday, a very nice man called Dave came on our coach and asked if we'd like to do a cruise across the Solent and around the naval dockyard in Portsmouth. As we have a lot of matelots on the rally, this was thought to be A Very Good Idea. Tony cried off, but, as he gets seasick on the Torpoint Ferry, this was hardly surprising. 40 seafarers set off to Cowes for the cruise. They knew they were in for a larf when they started to play the theme tune from 'Titanic' and the Captain said, 'Oops, sorry. Wrong CD!' the cruise was brilliant, with lovely weather and lots of boats to see. There was even a Russian destroyer in port, which is a very rare occurrence. What a wonderful end to the holiday!

But it's not over yet! There's a communal barbecue to look forward to tonight. While some were out cruising the Solent, Sandra, Glenys and Lesley kindly went out and bought industrial quantities of burgers, bangers and chicken.



About 60 campers turned out for the barbecue, and a bit of impromptu entertainment from Tony and Dot Rickard. We've made some really good friends on this rally – we'll be sorry to say goodbye tomorrow. A sad end to the evening – Bill Adams is whisked off to hospital with a suspected heart attack. He was only discharged from hospital the day before the rally began, so he has done well to stay the course, but we all feel for him, and his wife, Sue.

Saturday 24th June

Off we jolly well go! It takes about twice as long to strike camp as normal, as everyone is coming over to say goodbye. A rally is only as good as the people attending it, and our people have been brilliant. Sue Adams may need to spend a few extra days on the island due to Bill's illness, but Peter and Di Fox and Mike the site warden will keep a friendly eye on her.

We've had such a good time that we don't want the holiday to end. 12 of us decide to overnight in Poole and have a big barbecue, as the weather is so good. Dave and Anna Weston only live 10 minutes down the road from the site, South Lytchet Manor, but they decide to spend the night with us anyway. This is where the great Terry Earles Wind Up Mark 2 comes into being. Those of us who were on the earlier ferry waste no time in getting out the wine boxes and chairs. As Terry was one of those in the firing line over the smoking issue on Thursday evening, John Stephenson mused that it would be really funny if we could convince him that we were spending the night on a non-smoking site. This was too good an opportunity to miss, so Sandra P went to see the site owner, David, and asked him if he would do the honours. David asked if he could take Terry's money first, which we agreed would make the whole thing even better.

As luck would have it, Dave and Anna Weston checked in at the same time as Terry and Sandra E, so they heard the whole thing. Not only did David tell Terry the site was non-smoking, he also told him that barbecues weren't allowed. Nice one, David! When Terry finally made it to our corner of the field, he was greeted by Jack Dempsey puffing on a huge cigar. That's twice we've caught Terry this holiday, so we'll have to watch our backs. He's sure to want revenge! Terry & Jackie, Lesley's Brother & Sister-in-law come out for a drink Lesley is so relaxed she's in danger of 'doing a Jack.' What a great evening!

Sunday 25th June

We're up reasonably early to cook a big breakfast before we all go our separate ways. Larry says he's not hungry, but that's because he doesn't want to miss England playing Ecuador this afternoon. Larry, it isn't going to take 6 hours to do 120 miles. Let June have a sausage! Just as we light the barbecues, the heavens open, but we carry on undaunted, under umbrellas and John and Glenys's awning. Sandra Earles fetches her new gas stove to heat the baked beans on, but it refuses to light. One of the more technically-minded members of the party asks if there is a gas bottle in the stove? No there isn't! Undaunted, Sandra fetches the gas bottle, but it won't fit in the stove. Could that possibly be because the hotplate is upside down, Sandra? Well, what do you expect? As has been noted before, she is blonde!

All too soon, breakfast is over and so is our holiday. It's been great fun. We've made new friends and got to know old ones even better. As I said before, a rally is only as good as the people attending it. On that basis, this has been one of the best. Here's to the next one!

Thanks to Sandra Piddock who did some of the diary writing.

The Holiday Rally Song
(To the tune of 'Donald, Where's Your Troosers?')

We took the MCC to the Isle of Wight,
With 61 vans, what a wonderful sight!
And we all got together on the very first night.
Sandra, where is Terry?

He's sneaked off to the van, where he can't be seen,

To sneak a crafty mug of Ovaltine.
But don't tell everybody, 'cause that would be mean!
Larry, where has June gone?

She's off around the field flogging Bonus Balls,
But England's on the telly, so her takings are small.
She's not very popular at all!
Vince, where has your Lyn gone?

She took Brodie for a walk, and he gave her the slip.
He pulled her down the van steps, she didn't half trip!
She went flying, backside over tip.
June, where is your Larry?

He's locked himself out of the van once more.
This central locking system is really quite a bore!
He climbed in through the skylight, now his back is sore.
Jack, where is your Lesley?

She's just disappeared into Larry's van,
To massage the back of the Vice Chairman.
Such funny goings-on in an Autotrail Cheyenne!
Sandra, where is Brian?

He's directing all the traffic round the broken down bus.
The situation is quite serious.
Bellies are a-rumbling and they're all starting to cuss!
Sonia, where has John gone?

He's riding round the island on his mountain bike,
Trying to find the wallet that he lost last night.
It was in his pannier bag all along – OH SHITE!
Di, where is your Alan?

He's suffering from a dreadful disability,
Tony pinched his stick when he went for a wee.
Oh, what a terrible tragedy!
Lesley, where has Jack gone?

He's gone to the Liberal Club to watch the World Cup,
But they've sold out of Jameson's so he's fed up.
They've bought another bottle just for him to sup!
Kathy, where has Pete gone?

In the middle of a monologue which was very good,
His false teeth landed on the grass with a thud.
Now our Secretary's chewing the cud!
Where has the MCC gone?

They've gone to Lower Hyde in Shanklin town,
The weather's very hot, so they're all nice and brown.

And now they're going out for a night on the town!
That's where the MCC's gone!

The Ovaltinies Song

We are the Ovaltineys, little girls and boys.
Make your request, we'll not refuse you;
We are here just to amuse you.
Would you like a song or story,
Will you share our joys?
At games and sports, we're more than keen,
No merrier children could be seen.
Because we all drink Ovaltine,
We're happy girls and boys.